

CHAPTER: III OTHER PROG. & SRVCS	SECTION: 10 MEAP	COMAR: 07.06.06
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Qualifying Note: The Maryland Energy Assistance Program is administered by the Community Services Administration. Program information, including basic eligibility requirements, is provided because TCA case managers make referrals to the program.

OVERVIEW

- A. The Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) provides heating assistance grants from November through March each year to fuel suppliers and utility companies on behalf of eligible customers who:
1. Provide proof of identity, residence, and income
 2. File an application in person or by mail or proxy to the local MEAP agency indicating the primary fuel (i.e. oil, propane, kerosene, natural gas, electricity, or wood)

Note: All members of a household applying for MEAP must provide social Security cards. All household members 18 or older must provide proof of income for the 30 days prior to the MEAP application.

- B. MEAP automatically sends applications to households with aged or disabled members and may send applications to any previously eligible applicants, including those whose primary income comes from public assistance

REQUIREMENTS

- A. Customers are eligible if they are:
1. Maryland residents responsible for heating costs, except:
 - Subsidized housing residents directly responsible for paying their heating costs are only eligible for the minimum benefit for their fuel type
 - If heat is included in the rent and the landlord signs a "Landlord Agreement" stating the MEAP grant will be used to reduce the rent and the grant is sent directly to the landlord
 2. At or below 150% of the federal poverty level
 3. Applying during November through March
- B. TCA case managers coordinate the customer's MEAP application

CHAPTER: III OTHER PROG. & SRVCS	SECTION: 10 MEAP	COMAR: 07.06.06
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COORDINATION WITH MEAP:

- A. If a customer needs assistance with an energy bill or is facing an energy crisis, the case manager:
 1. Refers the customer to the local MEAP office, if a MEAP application has not been filed
 2. Calls ahead to the MEAP office so the customer may be seen as soon as possible
 3. Provides the customer with proof of the TCA benefit amount
- B. Determine MEAP application status as follows:
 1. Contact the local MEAP office to verify that a MEAP grant has been processed and approved
 2. If the MEAP application has been approved but the grant has not been issued, the MEAP office may be able to expedite issuance
 3. If the approved MEAP grant is sufficient to resolve the energy crisis, encourage the customer with minor children to apply for Emergency Assistance to Families with Children (EAFC)
- B. Refer customers to other agencies when the MEAP grant and local EA grant are unavailable or insufficient to resolve an energy crisis

Contact the local MEAP office to determine which programs (e.g. Partners in Energy) and non-profit agencies, such as local Fuel Funds, may have the necessary resources

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANTS FOR ENERGY

- A. Customers ineligible for MEAP or whose MEAP grant is insufficient to meet heating bills may apply to the local department for an emergency energy assistance grant under Emergency Assistance for Families with Children (EAFC)
 1. Base EAFC eligibility determination on the procedures contained in the local department's annual plan
 2. The applicant verifies:
 - MEAP application
 - Available MEAP grant was insufficient to resolve the energy crisis

CHAPTER: III OTHER PROG. & SRVCS	SECTION: 10 MEAP	COMAR: 07.06.06
--	----------------------------	---------------------------

- B. The Partners in Energy (PIE) program is available April through June, funding permitting, for customers requesting energy assistance who did not receive a MEAP grant
 - 1. MEAP, using their eligibility criteria and procedures, refers the customer to PIE
 - 2. Case managers should encourage PIE applicants to apply for MEAP during November through March when MEAP is in operation
- C. If neither MEAP nor PIE is available, the case manager should follow local department emergency assistance policies and procedures

UTILITY SERVICE PROTECTION PROGRAM (USPP)

- A. Customers must apply to the utility serving their area to participate in the Utility Service Protection Program (USPP)
- B. Mandated by the Public Service Commission (PSC), USPP is the only way low-income households can be sure of continuous utility service during the winter and provides:
 - 1. Access to budget billing service (even monthly payments)
 - 2. Long-term arrearage payment
- C. The main features are:
 - 1. This year-round, voluntary program is available to MEAP customers using Maryland area gas and/or electric utilities, even if their primary heat source is an unregulated fuel, if:
 - Their unpaid utility bill is less than \$400, and
 - They are first time participants

Note: BGE and Delmarva Power customers may apply MEAP benefits toward their arrearages even if they are repeat USPP households.

- 2. The monthly USPP budget billing payment for the next 12 months, which may vary according to unexpected increases in usage, is calculated by the local utility
- 3. Participants must continue to pay their designated monthly amount to prevent an electric or gas service shutoff, unless their income falls below 50% of federal poverty guidelines

CHAPTER: III OTHER PROG. & SRVCS	SECTION: 10 MEAP	COMAR: 07.06.06
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- Such extremely low income persons need only pay at least the equivalent of \$40 per month to prevent utility shutoffs during November through March
4. Customers, who were dropped from USPP for failing to meet their monthly payments, may pay an amount determined by PSC regulations to re-enter USPP